

First lady, astrologer cleared 'every move,' Regan book contends

By Jeremiah O'Leary
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The Washington Post _____
The New York Times _____
The Washington Times A-1
The Wall Street Journal _____
The Christian Science Monitor _____
New York Daily News _____
USA Today _____
The Chicago Tribune _____

Date 9 May '88

A book by Donald T. Regan, the former White House chief of staff, portrays Ronald Reagan as a puppet president with Nancy Reagan pulling the strings on the advice of a San Francisco astrologer.

The book, "For the Record: From Wall Street to the White House," goes on sale today, but excerpts appeared yesterday in Time magazine. Earlier press accounts of the astrology issue were not nearly as sweeping as the revelations in Mr. Regan's book disclosed yesterday.

"Virtually every major move and decision the Reagans made during my time as White House chief of staff was cleared in advance with a woman in San Francisco who drew up horoscopes to make certain that the planets were in favorable alignment for the enterprise," Mr. Regan wrote.

He described Mrs. Reagan as presiding over "a shadowy distaff presidency." She used "adroit guerrilla actions" to achieve goals in "a genuine belief that she was the best judge of her husband's interests," he wrote.

"Mrs. Reagan regarded herself as the president's alter ego not only in the conjugal but also in the political and official dimensions, as if the office that had been bestowed upon her husband by the people somehow fell into the category of worldly goods covered by the marriage vows."

Mr. Regan said former presidential aide Michael Deaver covered up for Mrs. Reagan's schedule juggling by pretending to be "a ditherer." It was Mr. Deaver who finally revealed to Mr. Regan that the first lady was consulting an astrologer.

After repeated clashes with the first lady over schedules, Mr. Deaver

told him about the San Francisco woman and advised him to "humor" the first lady, Mr. Regan wrote.

"By humoring her, we had given her control," he wrote.

But in an interview yesterday, the 69-year-old former chief of staff said: "I thought it was harmless, let's

indulge her. I knew Jim Baker [the White House chief of staff who preceded Mr. Regan] put up with it and big decisions were never really affected by the first lady's belief in the influence of the planets. As far as I know, it did the country no irreparable damage."

He also said, "I never knew for sure if the president was aware. I guess I could have started a fight between the president and his wife about this, but I am a gentleman."

Mr. Regan wrote that he told Vice President George Bush about Mrs. Reagan's dependence on astrological advice while they were discussing the president's schedule in February 1987.

Mr. Bush "listened ... with surprise and consternation on his face," and exclaimed, "Good God. I had no idea," Mr. Regan wrote.

"At one point, I kept a color-coded calendar on my desk (numerals highlighted in green ink for 'good' days, red for 'bad' days, yellow for 'iffy' days) as an aid to remembering when it was propitious to move the president of the United States from one place to another, or schedule him to speak in public, or commence negotiations with a foreign power," Mr. Regan wrote.

He never knew the astrologer's name and Mrs. Reagan referred to her only as "Friend." But Time identified her as "Nob Hill socialite Joan Quigley, sixtyish, a Vassar graduate who has written three books on astrology."

The president has insisted that no major policy or decision "in my mind" was affected by astrology. The Reagans did not answer reporters' shouted questions on their return from Camp David yesterday.

But the White House issued a brief statement later about the book, saying: "Vindictiveness and revenge are not admirable qualities, and are not worthy of comment. Donald Regan's attempts to defame the first lady, on Mother's Day no less, are certainly in that category."

Mr. Regan's book depicts the first lady as an easily irritated, "constant telephone presence," who meddled ceaselessly in administration af-

fairs. He asserted that Mrs. Reagan not only chose the speech writer for the State of the Union address and other important speeches, but also heavily edited them.

"I don't give a damn about the right-to-lifers," he quoted Mrs. Reagan as saying when she demanded that passages referring to abortion be deleted from a speech.

When CIA Director William Casey fell critically ill with a brain tumor, Mr. Regan wrote, the first lady repeatedly telephoned and urged that Mr. Casey be fired. "He's an embarrassment. He's dragging Ronnie down," she said angrily, according to Mr. Regan.

Mrs. Reagan also wanted Patrick Buchanan fired as communications director, Mr. Regan wrote. She wanted lawyer Edward Bennett Williams to take over the CIA and German-born John O. Koehler to replace Mr. Buchanan. In the end, Mr. Williams refused the job and Mr. Koehler turned out to be a former member of the Hitler Youth.

Mr. Regan's book attempts to settle one old score that is obviously a sore subject with him: the criticism he got in the Iran-Contra affair.

When the scandal broke, he wrote, Mrs. Reagan said, "He [Mr. Regan] is not going to talk to the press. My Friend says it's wrong for him to talk right now."

Mr. Regan said he replied, "My God, Nancy, he's going to go down in flames if he doesn't speak up." But he said she insisted because it was a red day on the calendar. She had been advised that "harm would come to Reagan if he went out of the White House," Mr. Regan wrote.

The former chief of staff portrayed the president as a reluctant decision-maker.

"Never did he issue a direct order, although I, at least, sometimes devoutly wished that he would," Mr. Regan added. "He listened, acquiesced, played his role, and waited for the next act to be written."

On the other hand, he wrote: "Never — absolutely never in my experience — did President Reagan really lose his temper or utter a rude or unkind word."

2.

And despite his abrupt firing, Mr. Reagan wrote: "My admiration for Reagan as president remains very great. My frustrations came not from Reagan but from those who attached themselves to him." It was, he wrote, "frivolous gossips and sycophants" who destroyed his friendship with the president.

But the former combat Marine and Wall Street executive makes no secret of the bitterness he feels over being fired "like a shoe clerk." His book repeats a report at the time that the president, being urged by his wife to get rid of Mr. Reagan, said to her angrily, "Get off my goddamn back."

Mr. Reagan said he believes the president's contention that he knew

nothing of the diversion of funds to the Contra rebels until told about it by Attorney General Edwin Meese on Nov. 25, 1986.

"The president," he wrote, "is a ruddy man, with bright red cheeks. He blanched when he heard Meese's words. The color drained from his face, leaving his skin pasty white. . . . Nobody who saw the president's reaction that afternoon could believe for a moment that he knew about the diversion of funds before Meese told him about it. He was the picture of a man to whom the inconceivable had happened."

Mr. Reagan wrote that the president would scan a number of newspapers. "The Washington Times with greater attention than the Washington Post and the N.Y. Times." He added that "one of the differences" between Mr. Reagan and Mr. Bush showed up at their morning meetings, when the president "generally recited passages from the conservative Washington Times" while Mr. Bush quoted the liberal New York Times.

"This is a big difference," Mr. Reagan wrote. The president was "deeply impressed" with Warren Brookes, a syndicated economics columnist in The Washington Times.

10.